

NEWS FROM:

International Terrorism and Nonproliferation Subcommittee

U.S. Rep. Ed Royce, Chairman

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Royce Statement on U.S. Counter-terror Strategy

Second of two hearings examining national strategy for combating terrorism

WASHINGTON, D.C. - - Today, the House Subcommittee on International Terrorism and Nonproliferation (ITNP) held a second hearing on our nation's counter-terror strategy. At the hearing, ITNP Chairman U.S. Rep. Ed Royce (R-CA-40) issued the following opening statement:

"Last month, the Subcommittee heard testimony on the evolving nature of the terrorist threat facing us, and how to update the *National Security Strategy for Combating Terrorism*. Some witnesses characterized al-Qaeda as a 'movement' or 'ideology,' rather than a formal organization. There was discussion of preventing terrorist access to WMD; the importance of more precisely defining the terrorist threat; the 'virtual caliphate' on the Internet; and the imperative of stepping-up the struggle for good will in the Muslim world.

"Since that hearing, on October 6th, President Bush delivered a major address in which he discussed in detail the ideology behind terrorist acts, and described the enemy as he has never before. The President labeled the enemy with several similar terms, including 'Islamic radicalism.' President Bush went on to describe Islamic radicalism as more like a 'loose network with many branches than an army under a single command. Yet these operatives, fighting on scattered battlefields,' he noted, 'share a similar ideology and vision for our world.'

"I welcome the President's move from the generic 'war on terrorism' to the more specific 'Islamic radicalism.' I commended the 9/11 Commission's use of 'Islamist terrorism' to define the threat, which ranges from Africa to Southeast Asia, from the Middle East to the Caucasus. Language choices impact U.S. policy, and how the American people perceive the threat facing our nation.

"Also of significance since the Subcommittee's last hearing is the release of a letter from al-Qaeda's number two, Ayman al-Zawahiri, to the leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq. Although we should not rely too heavily on a single source of intelligence, the letter provides insights into al-Qaeda's strategic goals for the Middle East, as well as the state of al-Qaeda itself. Zawahiri frequently mentions being isolated, asking for information. He speaks of not knowing what appeared on Aljazeera. Indicating further difficulty for al-Qaeda's leadership, Zawahiri mentions funding problems. We are making progress in

strangling the al-Qaeda organization, yet its philosophy unfortunately continues to breathe freely.

"I am afraid we have been losing the battle for ideas. Anti-Americanism is rampant. We do, however, know of one area in which we have been able to bolster our image. The humanitarian response to the tsunami in Southeast Asia helped to improve attitudes toward the U.S. in that region. To that end, the tragic earthquake that recently struck South Asia is an opportunity in a region critical to our struggle against Islamist terrorism. The U.S. has been a leader in the earthquake relief effort, with an initial \$50 million pledge and critical logistical support. Some with radical agendas are active too, competing with us for good will. Given the long-term struggle we are in, we should make the most of these opportunities. We can help people, as we should, and change attitudes - that, in the long run, will save lives too.

"The President's speech on terrorism made comparisons to the Cold War. That analogy is apt in several ways; as policy-makers, we need to be preparing the American people for a long struggle. Yet, I sense that the nation's concentration is drifting, largely because this is an unconventional war. Indeed, a recurrent theme in radical propaganda is that the West has a short attention span. In Afghanistan - where we see worrying signs - the Taliban likes to say, 'The Americans have the watches, but we've got the time.' This struggle will require a sustained commitment by our country, all elements of national power, and a good measure of creativity. We must fight complacency, for two threats are growing at a worrisome pace: jihadist ideology seems to be taking hold in many corners of the globe, while WMD knowledge and material is proliferating. The link of these two are of paramount concern to this Subcommittee. We look forward to hearing from the Administration about this critical challenge."

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